## 101 things to do: unravelling and interpreting community policing

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Article

# 101 Things to Do: Unravelling and Interpreting Community Policing

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**Abstract** There is a lively and long-running debate in the literature about what community policing is and how it works in everyday practice. We contribute to this expanding body of knowledge by minutely sifting and classifying the things neighbourhood coordinators (a kind of community officers) do in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Our endeavours have resulted in a list of 101 tasks they perform. A ranking of tasks was printed on small plasticized cards, enabling neighbourhood coordinators and their managers to identify core and peripheral tasks. Core tasks include keeping contact with citizens, local safety issues (supervising the neighbourhood, signalling small problems, handling accidents and incidents, and conflict mediation), administrative duties and providing the police team with information. Peripheral tasks mostly take the shape of supportive (managerial) work. In addition, we interviewed neighbourhood coordinators and police ward managers to gain their views on community policing.

Community policing is one of the most appreciated police strategies of the past three decades, which has, at the same time attracted much criticism. Following Skogan (2008a), who carried out ground-breaking empirical work on Chicago's Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS), these strategies centre around three core pillars: citizen involvement, problem-solving, and decentralization. Citizen involvement is about the police discovering and responding to citizens' daily crime and disorder problems, and involving them in practical solutions through frequent neighbourhood meetings. A problem-oriented approach concerns police officers' use of local neighbourhood information, an expansion of the police mandate from merely dealing with crime to broader security and quality-of-life issues and police cooperation with many (private) practitioners in solving such problems as may occur. Finally, decentralization refers to the devolution of authority and responsibility to lower levels in the police hierarchy, specifically to individual community officers in a local ward, the aim being to make close contact with small neighbourhoods.

Other authors have provided more depth to these basic tasks, emphasizing the importance of mini-police stations close to the people; the deployment of patrols on foot or bicycle, which are

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accessible to citizens; preventive (or proactive) policing in addition to reactive approaches; and police alliances with, for example, vigilant shopkeepers in a particular street (e.g. Fielding, 2005; Chappell, 2009; Terpstra, 2010). However, community policing around the world is still something of a vague strategy, due in part to its lack of conceptual clarity, the absence of organizational resources and priority, disappointing citizen participation, and conflicts of interests between direct stakeholders (e.g. Leighton, 1991; Fleming and O'Reilly, 2007; Skogan, 2005; Mastrofski *et al.*, 2007; Chappell, 2009; Terpstra, 2010). We therefore use the term community policing 'light' (Van Caem *et al.*, 2013), a banner under which neighbourhood officers rely on small groups of active citizens, form vital alliances with them, optimize information flows to and from the police, and organize resounding support from their managers and colleagues.

Given all the difficulties and debates mentioned, it seems to us wise to view community policing not so much as a static programme, but rather as a dynamic process (Van den Broeck, 2002), with all conceivable vicissitudes. In fact, the literature illustrates a surprising dearth of knowledge about what community police officers actually do and prefer to do in their day-to-day practice, and which tasks are viewed as 'most' and 'least' important according to the officers and their managers. Drawing on empirical results from Amsterdam, the Netherlands, this article explores the practice of community policing, the aim being to advance our understanding of what is happening on the work floor. Unravelling the core of community policing adds more detail to general dimensions such as problem solving, citizen participation, 'policing for the people', and network cooperation (e.g. Fielding, 2005; Davis, 2007; Skogan, 2008a; Terpstra, 2010). The research thus focuses on a particular characterization of community policing provided by the Amsterdam-Amstelland police, called 'neighbourhood coordination' (*buurtregie*). We have tried to shed a brighter light on the drawbacks, preferences, and ambivalences surrounding the idea of community policing.

## Research question

The Netherlands, as Punch *et al.* (2002) remark, is often seen as one of those 'progressive' societies within a strong welfare state, which values solidarity, tolerance, and condoning approaches to crime and punishment. Within such a context, the Dutch police have shaped their internationally admired—and, for their leniency, sometimes maligned—strong social 'soul' of community policing programmes over the past three decades. The basic assumption underlying the Dutch community policing philosophy was to achieve better public acceptance and legitimacy by 'bringing more police officers on to the street, establishing small police stations in the neighbourhood, and removing the strict separation between patrol officers and detectives (Aronowitz, 1997, p. 69). As elsewhere, after some decades of policy learning, most practitioners and academics now agree that it would be unrealistic to expect a 'full' implementation of Skogan's three community policing pillars (citizen involvement, problem solving, and decentralization) in the Netherlands (Terpstra, 2010; Van Caem *et al.*, 2013). This does not imply, though, that the concept should be dismissed as completely useless. More optimistically, our goal is to ask what community policing exactly means to the professionals involved.

As Bayley (2008) argued, the process of police reform in the direction of community policing strategies is frequently hampered by the fact that pressures for significant changes hardly ever come 'from the street'. In fact, actors from outside the force, such as politicians and (academic) experts, usually craft big, novel ideas, which can indeed bring the creativity and innovation necessary to move forward. Nevertheless, not involving the rank-and-file police staff, who carries out the reform plans, might result in fierce resistance and, at worst, failure (Skogan, 2005). Community police officers should thus be regarded as genuine 'change agents', generating the credibility needed for intervention and reform. Assuming that

community policing is a continuous 'work in progress', it may be that officers with enthusiasm for their work find that enthusiasm tempered when reforms require that 'officers do many of their old jobs in new ways, and that they take on tasks that they never imagined would come their way' (Skogan, 2008b, p. 26). In particular, competing demands between 'street cops' and 'management cops' (Reuss-Ianni, 1983) may play a role here.

It is against this background that we present a study of the work of 'neighbourhood coordinators' (*buurtregisseurs*), a type of community police officer active in Amsterdam (Miltenburg *et al.*, 2011). We pay attention both to types of community policing activities and the perceptions neighbourhood coordinators have of their profession. These perceptions are contrasted with the views and expectations of police ward chiefs, who are the neighbourhood coordinators' managers. Our central research question is: how do neighbourhood coordinators and their managers understand the everyday practice of community policing in Amsterdam? This question rests on three sub-questions: (i) Which tasks do neighbourhood coordinators perform in their everyday practice? (ii) What are core tasks and peripheral tasks, according to neighbourhood coordinators and their managers? (iii) How do neighbourhood coordinators perceive their work relative to their managers? Before moving on to the empirical findings, we first sketch out the methodology we adopted.

## Research design and methods

Our research design closely follows the three sub-questions posed above. The research project's first phase involved listing the community policing tasks in the Amsterdam-Amstelland force. Surprisingly, the police were unable to present any meaningful policy documents presenting the formal tasks and activities that neighbourhood coordinators were expected to perform. Community policing turned out to be a highly informal undertaking, framed within broad, abstract policy guidelines. For that reason, we made use of information gathered from three other sources: a regional forum of neighbourhood coordinators set up to professionalize community policing practices; several expert groups of neighbourhood coordinators which help shape specialized policies for youth, regular offenders, and so on; and 'senior' neighbourhood coordinators with a clear vision of their work, thanks to their long-term experience with community policing. This survey resulted in a checklist of no fewer than 101 things to do (Table A1). Some categories, like 'tasks related to squatting', cover additional police tasks, such as talking to squatters, informing neighbours about clearing occupied buildings, and negotiating with lawyers. For clarity, however, we decided not to be overly exhaustive in presenting our information.

Second, in February 2011, we conducted a pilot study to test the adequacy of our checklist, assess peoples' willingness to participate, and increase the validity and reliability of the data generated. In carrying out this study, we printed each of the 101 tasks identified onto plasticized cards, which we distributed among 21 neighbourhood coordinators deployed in Amsterdam. They were asked to reflect on the clarity of definitions and the practicability of the card games proposed: first ranking the cards in terms of 'time spent on tasks' and second the 'importance of tasks'. Overall, the response was promising; we made only minor textual adjustments as needed to ensure that everybody would understand the procedures. Following our pilot study, we began the next phase of the research (described below), which involved interviews and card sorting. This phase covered the months April and May 2011. Respondents in the pilot study did not participate again to avoid unwelcome bias.

Third, we selected five police wards as a sample of the 32 wards in Amsterdam. The five ward team chiefs each selected three neighbourhood coordinators (15 in total) on the basis of their availability (people were allowed to opt out) and representativeness. Together, they embody a cross-section of the overall population of 220 neighbourhood

coordinators. Our respondents' average age is 48.5 years (48.6 years in the total population), 13.33% of our respondents are non-Dutch in origin (10.4% in the total population), and 20% are female (18.7% in the total population). Despite this, there is still a potential bias here as ward team chief may recommended us respondents who would give a good impression of the team. At the same time, as our interviews disclose, neighbourhood coordinators were perfectly capable of criticizing both their colleagues and managers. At our request, neighbourhood coordinators made piles of cards representing their daily work by choosing between 'most important' and 'least important'. We then asked them to divide the same cards into piles ranging from 'most' to 'least' time spent on the task described. Tasks not performed were labelled 'no time spent on'. The two dimensions together make up 'core tasks' and 'peripheral tasks' in community policing.

Fourth, we asked the five police ward chiefs to sort the 101 cards in order of importance. This allowed us to draw comparisons between their managerial preferences towards community policing on the one hand, and the views of neighbourhood coordinators on the other. We did not ask ward team chiefs about which tasks require the 'most' or 'least' time as they had difficulty estimating this. Ward team chiefs were solely interested in what they thought 'important' or 'unimportant' in community policing. Finally, we interviewed the 15 neighbourhood coordinators and five ward team chiefs about their perceptions of community policing activities.

## Contours of community policing

Here, we briefly categorize the tasks that neighbourhood coordinators perform during their working hours. Subsequently, we report on the 'most important' and 'least important' tasks, as well as 'core' and 'peripheral' tasks related to community policing in Amsterdam. In addition, we draw comparisons between the opinions of neighbourhood coordinators and ward team chiefs. Such comparisons should be taken as indicative only, because our findings depend on relatively small numbers of respondents, ward team chiefs in particular.

### Categorizing tasks

As stated above, our respondents together listed 101 tasks related to what they understood as community policing. These tasks can be grouped into seven categories. The first represents 'community safety' as a means of risk prevention, keeping the neighbourhood clean, assisting and monitoring people and places, and other wide-ranging activities not related to crime per se. The second category denotes 'crime and disorder problems'. This category covers police work devoted to serious and repeated offences, local priorities such as sexual abuse or car theft, and aftercare for victims and offenders alike. Category three covers 'contacts with citizens on neighbourhood issues'. Neighbourhood coordinators, by their nature, try to make contact with all sorts of people in their local ward. Proximity is a key concept here. The fourth ('contacts with the police team') and fifth ('contacts with network partners') categories express the connections neighbourhood coordinators maintain with their police colleagues and other practitioners in the field of local community safety. 'Administrative tasks', the sixth category, represents various kinds of bureaucratic responsibilities. The seventh and final category ('other tasks') is a residual category for exceptional jobs like VIP protection or assisting bailiffs to seize possessions from those with outstanding fines.

### Most and least important tasks

Table 1 shows a list of the 22 'most important' tasks according to 50% or more of the neighbourhood coordinators. About two-third of these tasks (64%) involve community safety issues and social responses to crime and disorder problems like handling domestic violence and providing aftercare to

**Table 1:** Most important tasks according to neighbourhood coordinators [Tasks which 50% or more of the respondents ($N = 15$) stated are 'very important']

1. Providing aftercare in case of robberies and raids (87%)*
2. Maintaining presence and visibility in the neighbourhood (87%)*
3. Maintaining contacts with 'networked' safety partners (80%)
4. Providing aftercare in case of domestic violence (80%)*
5. Providing aftercare in case of other criminal acts (80%)
6. Performing foot patrols (direct surveillance) (80%)
7. Consulting the police team (73%)*
8. Signalling small neighbourhood problems and achieving improvements (73%)
9. Recording data in police administrative systems (73%)*
10. Maintaining contact with citizens (73%)
11. Attending meetings at the police station (67%)*
12. Making new contacts in community safety networks (67%)*
13. Recording the presence of 'risky' persons and places in the neighbourhood (60%)*
14. Attending events (60%)
15. Handling non-urgent incidents (60%)*
16. Coordinating the handling of accidents and incidents with others (60%)*
17. Consulting janitors and neighbourhood supervisors on crime and disorder (60%)
18. Attending meetings with organized active citizens (53%)
19. Conflict mediation (53%)*
20. Handling domestic violence (52%)*
21. Combating youth crime/street gangs (52%)*
22. Consulting municipal neighbourhood supervisors on crime and disorder (52%)

*These tasks were also judged important by >50% of the ward team chiefs ($N = 5$).

**Table 2:** Least important tasks according to neighbourhood coordinators [Tasks which 50% or more of the respondents ($N = 15$) state are 'not important']

1. Acting as a duty officer (87%)*
2. Acting as a chief of service (80%)*
3. Assisting riot squads (67%)*
4. Performing reception desk functions on point duty (67%)*
5. Sending Tweets and other social media messages (67%)*
6. Organizing programmes to prevent car theft (60%)*
7. Acting as an assistant public prosecutor (60%)*
8. Clearing bicycle wrecks (53%)*
9. Providing company first-aid (53%)*
10. Performing other (supportive) managerial tasks (53%)

*These tasks were also judged unimportant by > 50% of the ward team chiefs ($N = 5$).

victims. The other tasks can be associated with making contacts with citizens, police colleagues and wider network partners, and administrative responsibilities. From their own perspective, at least three out of five ward team chiefs agreed on 13 (60%) of all the important tasks mentioned by neighbourhood coordinators. These chiefs tend to be less concerned with tasks like attending events and consulting third parties. There were three tasks—attending training and education programmes, contacting religious institutions about risks, and imposing restraining orders on people—which ward team chiefs valued highly, but neighbourhood coordinators did not.

Turning to the 'least important' tasks according to a majority of neighbourhood coordinators, Table 2 highlights great agreement (9 out of 10 tasks overlap) with their managers. Peripheral tasks, in general, involve (assistant) managerial functions, providing company first-aid, and exotic duties like assisting riot squads (i.e. consulting them in times of local tension and outbreaks of violence). Another observation is that micro-police stations in neighbourhoods or at traffic junctions have virtually disappeared in Amsterdam. The stationing of neighbourhood coordinators on 'point duty' thus scores very low in the rankings. The same goes for 'organizing anti-car-theft programmes'. These kinds of crime prevention schemes have been increasingly outsourced to third parties, such as municipal bodies and private security companies.

## Core tasks

Combining 'tasks spent most time on' and 'most important tasks' into one overview, Table 3 presents a list of core tasks in community policing, on which at least half of the 15 neighbourhood coordinators interviewed agreed. Moreover, neighbourhood coordinators and their managers share a common vision of 7 out of 11 tasks (64%). There is thus, substantial agreement among ward team chiefs and neighbourhood coordinators about what community policing looks like. The core tasks

centre mainly on community safety issues: conflict mediation, signalling small problems in the neighbourhood and gaining improvements, handling non-urgent matters, coordinating the handling of incidents and accidents, and performing foot patrols. This last task directly relates to being visible to citizens and keeping contact with them.

The observation that neighbourhood coordinators do not always spend 'most time' on the 'most important' tasks listed in Table 1 may be explained in two ways. Either several important tasks (e.g. providing aftercare to or consultation with people) do not absorb enormous amounts of time, or neighbourhood coordinators simply lack the time for a lot of things. In support of the latter explanation, we note that neighbourhood coordinators invest much effort into maintaining and expanding their professional networks, including ties with all sorts of agencies (health care, schools, housing associations, etc.), consulting with their police team, and filling in forms (administrative tasks). They actually spent more time on bureaucratic procedures and 'red tape' than they desired. Tasks linked to tackling serious (organized) crime are absent from the inventory. The neighbourhood coordinators' social role mostly takes priority over activities involving the maintenance of public order.

## Peripheral tasks

Combining 'tasks spent no time on' and 'least important tasks' into a single overview, Table 4

**Table 3:** Core community policing tasks according to >50% of the neighbourhood coordinators ($N = 15$)

| Task | Most important (%) | Most time spent on (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Recording data in police administrative systems* (administrative tasks) | 73 | 93 |
| Maintaining contacts with 'networked' safety partners (networks) | 80 | 80 |
| Conflict mediation* (community safety) | 53 | 73 |
| Signalling small neighbourhood problems and achieving improvements (community safety) | 73 | 73 |
| Maintaining presence and visibility in the neighbourhood* (contacts with citizens) | 87 | 73 |
| Making new contact in community safety networks* (networks) | 67 | 67 |
| Performing foot patrols (direct supervision) (community safety) | 80 | 67 |
| Consulting the police team*(police team) | 73 | 60 |
| Maintaining contact with citizens (contacts with citizens) | 73 | 60 |
| Handling non-urgent incidents* (community safety) | 60 | 60 |
| Coordinating the handling of accidents and incidents with others* (community safety) | 60 | 53 |

*These tasks were also judged important by >50% of the ward team chiefs ($N = 5$).

**Table 4:** Peripheral community policing tasks according to >50% of the neighbourhood coordinators ($N = 15$)

| Task | Least important (%) | No time spent on (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Acting as a duty officer* (other tasks) | 87 | 87 |
| Acting as a chief of service* (other tasks) | 80 | 80 |
| Assisting riot squads* (other tasks) | 67 | 53 |
| Performing reception desk functions on point duty* (contacts with citizens) | 67 | 87 |
| Sending Tweets and other social media messages* (contacts with citizens) | 67 | 93 |
| Organizing programmes to prevent car theft* (crime and disorder) | 60 | 53 |
| Acting as an assistant public prosecutor* (other tasks) | 60 | 87 |
| Providing company first-aid* (other tasks) | 53 | 80 |

*These tasks were also judged unimportant by >50% of the ward team chiefs ($N = 5$).

presents a list of peripheral tasks in community policing, the ranking of which was agreed by at least half of the 15 neighbourhood coordinators interviewed. Ward team chiefs endorsed these tasks without exception. As with community policing core tasks, the list of peripheral tasks is not exhaustive. Nevertheless, we may conclude that, at both extremes, the Amsterdam police force displays a rough consensus about what community policing is (long-term, non-coercive investments in neighbourhood safety) and what it is not (managerial responsibilities). This does not mean, though, that there is little or no variation in how community policing has been implemented around the city. Local community policing policies demonstrate 'refraction' due to 'adaption to unique contingencies or circumstances' (Maguire and Mastrofski, 2000, p. 14). For example, allocating priority to supervising pubs and clubs only makes sense in thriving nightlife districts.

## Neighbourhood coordinators and ward team chiefs speaking out

How, then, do neighbourhood coordinators view their job? The vast majority of all respondents interviewed express general satisfaction with the police work they do. There are two main reasons for this. First, neighbourhood coordinators enjoy the privilege they have of making long-term investments in their neighbourhoods. They have the opportunity 'to get to know' inhabitants and 'to be known' by them, signal problems, reassure people and help them out. One respondent says:

> Community policing is the most comprehensive police strategy. '[. . .] As a neighbourhood coordinator I can organise things myself. I am working with citizens and with professional networks, I am doing administrative tasks, and I give advice to shopkeepers. [. . .] There is no other job like this'. (Neighbourhood coordinator 8)

Relatively, neighbourhood coordinators applaud their 'professional autonomy'—or, to use a phrase borrowed from the public administration literature—their 'discretionary space' (Lipsky, 1980). Respondents underline the importance of flexibility and adaptiveness as important requirements for meeting the needs of their local communities. Neighbourhood coordinators can thus be depicted as pragmatic problem-solvers rather than rigid bureaucrats.

Second, neighbourhood coordinators regularly receive appreciation from the communities they serve. Although not many citizens attend beat meetings or participate in 'liveability' projects, some do address certain safety and security issues to neighbourhood coordinators, and come up with possible solutions. Moreover, neighbourhood coordinators receive positive feedback after processing an incident or crime. Responses like this mean that they develop 'a sense of belonging' in their local wards. 'Police work', a respondent puts it, 'is people work'. He feels he has done 'the right thing' if local inhabitants show sympathy for his work (Neighbourhood coordinator 15). Another neighbourhood coordinator (respondent 1) stresses that listening to people, treating them fairly and respectfully, and explaining decisions that have been made usually improve the public's judgement. In other words, being open and accessible are prerequisites to enhancing people's trust and support (see also Tyler, 2004).

However, various respondents also make it clear that police work calls for a certain distance from the citizenry in order to undertake firm action in critical and complex situations. Put differently, neighbourhood coordinators should be capable of acting as effective and responsible 'street-level leaders' (Vinzant and Crothers, 1994)—that is, professionals who have the power to mobilize resources and have a profound influence on citizens' decision-making. This may evoke resistance from some neighbourhood inhabitants:

> 'As a neighbourhood coordinator you can't please everybody. A lack of

> appreciation is part and parcel of your function'. (Neighbourhood coordinator 7)

Furthermore, as respondents explain, their autonomy comes with an important downside. Neighbourhood coordinators carry a heavy burden, literally and metaphorically, of 101 tasks they have to cope with. They thus claim the necessity of a certain discretionary space in dealing with their workload:

> 'I had to learn to set personal boundaries for myself. I had to set priorities. [...] That meant adjusting my expectations somehow'. (Neighbourhood coordinator 3)
>
> 'Taking three days off is like punishing myself. After returning to the office I find so many e-mails in my inbox. It takes the whole day to clean it up, which implies a shortage of hours to do other work. Bureaucracy and administration absorb very much time'. (Neighbourhood coordinator 10)

At the same time, however, neighbourhood coordinators sense that their autonomy—their room to manoeuvre—has been shrinking over the years. They view ward team chiefs and patrol officers as being part of this trend.

In comparison to patrollers, who can be characterized by classically defined police tasks such as maintaining public order and responding to emergencies, neighbourhood coordinators complain that their own more social position in policing has been systematically undervalued. Many patrol officers do not seem to realize what community policing entails:

> 'I sense that colleagues at work have a lot of difficulty with the notion of neighbourhood coordination. They say that neighbourhood coordinators do nothing at all. I find that particularly annoying. The distance from other colleagues is a real complication of community policing'. (Neighbourhood coordinator 11)

Accordingly, neighbourhood coordinators have difficulty stimulating and motivating their local police team to collaborate on issues in their specific neighbourhood. Even worse, respondents convey that they are commonly represented as the 'garbage can' of police work:

> 'If colleagues in the patrol division don't know how to handle a situation, they push it onto neighbourhood coordination. They don't ask, they just throw the extra workload over the fence. [...] I do understand this when colleagues are extremely busy. That is not always obvious, though'. (Neighbourhood coordinator 10)

The neighbourhood coordinators' sensation of being marginalized gives rise to the question of how ward team chiefs govern community policing today. Do they actively support and encourage neighbourhood coordinators in their work?

For their part, 13 of the 15 neighbourhood coordinators interviewed report pleasant relationships with their managers. Nevertheless, and corresponding with findings above, criticism emerges about 'a lack of defence of community policing against prejudices from the workplace' (Neighbourhood coordinator 4). Subsequently, respondents lamented a 'focus on numbers' (Neighbourhood coordinator 11) within the police team, which refers to pre-occupations with measurable targets and performance output in the Netherlands. This bias towards statistics perhaps exposes neighbourhood coordinators to stronger influences from hierarchical steering mechanisms, limiting their professional autonomy. All the more surprisingly, then, ward team chiefs seemed quite relaxed about their managerial leadership style:

> 'I am not right on their heels. We catch up monthly to discuss how things are

> going in the neighbourhood. [. . .] That is how I gauge community policing. [. . .]. We have areasonably equal relationship'. (Ward team chief 1)
>
> 'Results count for me. I am less interested in how neighbourhoods achieve these results. They are professionals. I don't tell professionals what to do. Only when something happens do I have a reason for intervention'. (Ward team chief 2)

Such insights imply that ward team chiefs do appreciate neighbourhood coordinators' efforts and professional autonomy. However, given our respondents' complaints, they might also adopt a more stimulating role to encourage wider organizational support for community policing in Amsterdam.

## Conclusion and discussion

This article engages empirically with the modest (or 'light') implementation of community policing in Amsterdam, where neighbourhood coordinators meet with small groups of citizens and local entrepreneurs. The research question posed is how neighbourhood coordinators and police ward chiefs understand community policing as an everyday practice. It turned out that neighbourhood coordinators carry an impressive workload of 101 tasks, which can be categorized as: 'community safety', 'crime and disorder problems', 'contacts with citizens about neighbourhood issues', 'contacts with the police team', 'contacts with network partners', 'administrative tasks', and 'other'. By combining 'most important tasks' and 'tasks spent most time on', we arrived at a set of core tasks centring on citizen contacts, local safety issues (supervising the neighbourhood, signalling minor problems, handling accidents and incidents, and conflict mediation), administrative duties, and providing the police team with information. In contrast, neighbourhood coordinators spent little or no time on such peripheral tasks as supportive managerial work. They also find these tasks of little or no importance. All in all, neighbourhood coordinators and police ward team chiefs displayed greater agreement on what community policing is not, rather than what it is. We found a 100% score in terms of 'peripheral tasks' compared with a 64% score in terms of 'core tasks'. Nevertheless, 64% agreement on core tasks still reflects a reasonably mutual vision of the practice of community policing in Amsterdam.

Neighbourhood coordinators cherish their professional autonomy and receive positive responses from residents, shopkeepers, and others in their local wards. They are less satisfied with their workload and with their fairly marginal position in the police team. In their own estimation, neighbourhood coordinators may be typified as 'loners' whose colleagues might think of as 'not real' or 'too soft' as policemen. This is a burdensome development, as patrol officers tend to push more and more odd jobs onto the neighbourhood coordinators. The lack of a broadly accepted, clear-cut definition of community policing is also to blame here. Regarding the ward team chiefs, our study suggests that they should not be underestimated in successfully encouraging neighbourhood coordinators to take part in actions that fit local circumstances. After all, and despite the identified 'core' of community policing, no two local police wards look exactly the same. This calls for mutual agreement on what the 'prominent' problems are. As researchers have argued over recent years, policing 'hot spots'—whether places (Weisburd, 2008) or people (Meurs, 2010)—is more effective than spreading activities 'thinly across the urban landscape' (Braga, 2001, p. 105). Implementing community policing thus requires a more rationalized list of priorities tailored to specific neighbourhoods, and reasonable autonomy for the neighbourhood coordinators in this respect.

Departing from such a list, ward team chiefs may organize improved support for neighbourhood coordinators by enrolling intermediate police colleagues in community-oriented projects and programmes. In so doing, ward team chiefs should be more aware of intra-organizational sensitivities, and ways to handle obstructions and resistance arising from prejudices and stereotypes. Neighbourhood coordinators simply need a better image within their force. Enhancing cooperation with their direct colleagues may bring community policing to a higher level. In addition to generally known policing practices like law enforcement and catching criminals (see e.g. Bittner, 1990), community policing can be seen as a more social, citizen-oriented strategy for achieving the goals of 'good'—legitimate, trustworthy, and accountable—police work.

Furthermore, and seen from a broader perspective, the Dutch police have claimed a 'warning and advisory' task (Terpstra, 2011) as a possibility to build better cooperation with both willing and unwilling agencies in the field of local community safety. Whether the police will be able to fulfil this ambition depends greatly on the quality of interpersonal associations, the frequency of meetings, and the exchange of information. Neighbourhood coordinators already hold a pivotal position in forging such closer contacts between the police and wider security networks. It would therefore be wise to grant them sufficient back-up to encourage, and perhaps even persuade network partners such as municipal authorities, health care, and youth work to take up their share of responsibility. For ward team managers, nudging neighbourhood coordinators into the desired direction comes down to balancing direct steering with an acknowledgement of their professional autonomy. Diplomatic skills are crucial in this respect, as well as a continuous and constructive dialogue between ward team managers and neighbourhood coordinators about what to do, and what not, in terms of community policing.

## Appendix

**Table A1:** 101 tasks of neighbourhood coordinators in Amsterdam Community safety

| | |
|---|---|
| **Community safety** | |
| 1. | Recording the presence of 'risky' persons and places in the neighbourhood |
| 2. | Building dossiers on local safety issues |
| 3. | Performing foot patrols (direct surveillance) |
| 4. | Monitoring local 'hot spots' |
| 5. | Conducting local safety inspections |
| 6. | Supervising pubs and clubs |
| 7. | Signalling small neighbourhood problems and achieving improvements |
| 8. | Issuing fines to people for small offences |
| 9. | Conflict mediation |
| 10. | Assisting confused (or mentally ill) people |
| 11. | Visiting truant youth (together with an attendance officer) |
| 12. | Consulting schools about problematic (truant) youth |
| 13. | Arranging 'safer school projects' |
| 14. | Performing other school-related activities |
| 15. | Contacting religious (e.g. Jewish) institutions about risks |
| 16. | Advising citizens on crime and disorder prevention |
| 17. | Advising businesses on crime and disorder prevention |
| 18. | Encouraging quality schemes for 'Safe Business Conduct' (*Keurmerk veilig ondernemen*) |
| 19. | Organizing traffic checks |
| 20. | Clearing bicycle wrecks |
| 21. | Handling emergencies |
| 22. | Handling non-urgent incidents |
| 23. | Coordinating the handling of accidents and incidents with others |
| 24. | Responding to (other) 'issues of the day' |
| **Crime and disorder problems** | |
| 25. | Administering information about serious (organized) crime |
| 26. | Gathering information about (organized) crime activities |
| 27. | Consulting schools about crime and disorder |
| 28. | Consulting youth workers and social workers about crime and disorder |
| 29. | Consulting municipal neighbourhood supervisors about crime and disorder |
| 30. | Consulting janitors (housing associations) about crime and disorder |
| 31. | Making appointments with police team leaders about high priority offences |
| 32. | Organizing broad police team projects (e.g. related to persistent crime and disorder) |
| 33. | Participation in offender-centred policies |
| 34. | Responding to sexual abuse |

(continued)

**Table A1:** Continued

35. Handling domestic violence
36. Organizing programmes to prevent bicycle theft
37. Organizing programmes to prevent car theft
38. Destroying cannabis cultivation sites
39. Combating youth crime/street gangs
40. Performing assorted squatting-related tasks
41. Imposing restraining orders on people (e.g. in case of domestic violence)
42. Taking identified suspects into custody
43. Conducting home visits in case of criminal offences (large-scale investigations)
44. Visiting regular offenders
45. Speaking to offenders about their motivation
46. Providing aftercare in case of domestic violence
47. Providing aftercare in case of robberies and raids
48. Providing aftercare in case of other criminal acts
49. Providing the criminal justice system with information for criminal prosecutions
50. Responding to round-robin letters
51. Advising on detainees' leave-of-absence applications

**Contacts with citizens on neighbourhood issues**

52. Attending meetings with organized active citizens
53. Maintaining contact with citizens
54. Providing information to (elderly) persons
55. Attending events
56. Being available during consultation hours
57. Performing reception desk functions on point duty
58. Discussing neighbourhood problems with citizens at the police station's front desk
59. Responding to calls from the police call centre
60. Maintaining presence and visibility in the neighbourhood
61. Writing articles for local newspapers
62. Distributing flyers and posters
63. Sending Tweets and other social media messages

**Contacts with the police team**

64. Assisting police patrols
65. Assisting police investigations
66. Assisting riot squads
67. 'Peace-making' during riots and disturbances
68. Organizing briefings for police colleagues
69. Attending meetings at the police station
70. Consulting the police team
71. Providing information to the police team about local events
72. Supervising police trainees

**Contacts with network partners**

73. Participating in municipal administrative forums (with public servants)

(continued)

**Table A1:** Continued

74. Participating in municipal political forums (with aldermen and the mayor)
75. Maintaining contact with 'networked' safety partners
76. Attending meetings with 'networked' safety partners
77. Providing information to 'networked' safety partners through briefings
78. Encouraging cooperation between 'networked' safety partners
79. Advising on operational agreements among 'networked' safety partners
80. Implementing covenants with 'networked' safety partners
81. Making new contact in community safety networks
82. Managing neighbourhood safety teams
83. Managing street coaches
84. Advising 'networked' safety partners on local events
85. Providing licences for local events

**Administrative tasks**

86. Recording data in police administrative systems
87. Recording crimes reported by citizens
88. Handling crime reports provided by police colleagues
89. Contributing to political dossiers (e.g. on youth problems)
90. Project planning (e.g. on solving persistent disorder and nuisance)
91. Conducting work assignments
92. Drawing up weekly work schedules

**Other tasks**

93. Acting as an assistant public prosecutor
94. Acting as a duty officer
95. Acting as a chief of service
96. Performing other (supportive) managerial tasks
97. Providing company first-aid
98. Assisting bailiffs
99. Guiding demonstrations
100. Attending to training and education programmes
101. Acting in relation to visits of ministers and other VIPs to Amsterdam

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